



# Four Questions That Qualify Clients Instantly

*Advice and instruction for technology sellers and startups.*

**Based on Episode 99**

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Far too often sellers waste time trying to sweet talk prospects into buying things they don't want. This is a mission bound to fail. It's much easier to make a sale if the customer truly needs your product or service. That only makes sense, right?

But it begs the question, how do you find clients who are qualified to buy your stuff? The short answer; ask them!

None of us are mind readers. It's hard to guess with confidence what a person is thinking. But if you ask someone the right kinds of questions, they will say things that will signal their wants and desires. By asking good questions, you can **sort** out who's a prospective client, and who's not.

The best way to do that is to use the [SORT Method](#). This method consists of a four types of open ended questions that will stimulate a conversation. The questions are powerful, but it's the listening that really makes this method work. By asking open ended questions, you'll be able to sort out who's a good match and who's not.

Don't waste time talking to people who aren't qualified to buy. Once you know a person is NOT a match, you can kindly part ways and focus on others who are more likely to buy. You're no longer wasting the customer's time, and you're not wasting your time. This is a win-win for all parties.

# The SORT Questions

This method consists of a four types of open ended questions that stimulate conversations. The questions are based around:

## **Story, Obstacles, Ramifications, and Transformation**

By asking these open ended questions, you will discover your prospective customer's challenges and if they are qualified to become customers in the immediate future.

**Warning:** Far too often sellers spend all their time TELLING prospective customers all about their product and services. Don't do that! Let them do all the talking. Let them talk themselves into learning more about you. Instead, slow down the sale and ask insightful questions.

Ask the following questions and listen authentically:

**Story** - Ask them about the past, present and future goals of their business. Find out how they started with the company, why they work here and what they hope to achieve. Then ask about their day to day work, both challenges and successes. Focus on their customers too, whether they are happy, content, distraught or ready to leave. And then ask about their future goals in the next 6, 12 and 48 months. Ask them about their long term plans, what is their "*Happily Ever After*". But make sure to take your time and listen to the answers. Slow the sale down.

**Obstacles** - Next ask "*What prevents you from achieving your future story? What are the obstacles that are stopping your "Happily Ever After"?*" Take notes as they speak. Build a list of obstacles. These obstacles are gold to your ears. The goal of these questions is to discover their needs, but to also have them connect emotionally to the issues they face daily. They may get a little agitated when reflecting on their challenges. This is a good thing. These questions will warm them up before you pitch your solutions.

**Ramifications** - The next set of questions will further discover their pains and desires. They also ratchet up the emotion of the challenges they face. The key here is to understand the **negative ramifications** the obstacles create in their business. Ask them the following: "*What are the ramifications of these obstacles in your business? How are you negatively impacted when these obstacles occur?*" Commonly the answers will center around rising costs, falling revenues, narrowing profits, rising faults, increasing attrition, and low morale. You are successful when they viscerally feel the pain. They are almost ready to hear what you have.

**Transformation** - The last set of questions produce hope. When asking these questions, you create possibility and a light at the end of the tunnel. Ask them the following: "*If these obstacles were eliminated, how would that transform your business?*" The goal is to envision a better world. Now they can feel what their business would look

like WITHOUT obstacles. Now they are open to hearing your solutions without objections.

It may take a while to ask these questions and listen to the answers. But once they accept possibility, they are ready and hungry to hear solutions. Closing becomes simple. It's now a matter of showing how your product or service removes the daily obstacles they face.

Or..... you may find you don't have what they need. That's OK.

Better to learn now than to waste each other's time with a demonstration ill-suited for their business.

## Write 5 Questions per Question Type

Be prepared before you meet your prospective client. For each of these four types of questions, brainstorm 5 questions pertinent to your industry. Use the attached (See Attachment A) to complete the questions.

## Preparation

Once completed, memorize the list and use during the qualification conversation. Ask the questions and **listen!** Really listen. These are open ended questions. The prospect might be very talkative and say a lot. The more they talk, the more likely they will buy. Let me repeat that.

**The more they talk, the more likely they will buy.**

Don't forget to take great notes throughout the conversation.

## In Search of Ache, Agony and Desire

Your goal is to see if they are in a state of **ache or agony**. If they're in a state of ache, they are unlikely to take action. If it's only a minor ache there is no motivation to buy. It's unlikely you will close them in the immediate future.

You are on the **lookout for people in agony!** If you can immediately provide instant relief, it's highly likely you will win the sale.

Or, you could be on the lookout for people in a deep state of **desire**. It depends on your business. Note that desire sales take longer to close. Go into the opportunity with expectation the conversation will take long time. Patience is your secret weapon.

For further instruction, listen to the [Sales Babble podcast Episode 99](#) and learn how to start selling with confidence today.

# ATTACHMENT A

## Story Questions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Obstacles Questions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Ramification Questions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Transformation Questions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.